STATE OF UTAH GENERAL OUTLOOK
Feb 1, 2005

SUMMARY
Water supply conditions are improving statewide, in southern Utah, quite dramatically and in the north, to a far lesser extent. Beginning with southern Utah and the Uintah Basin, snowpacks are on a record pace. Many sites are above 200% of average with some pushing 400%. The Uintah Basin, the Sevier, southwest Utah and the Escalante are all above their average April 1 snowpack with 2 months of accumulation remaining. The Sevier and southwest Utah have set new record high February 1 snowpacks and the Uintah Basin has tied the record. The potential for new record maximum snowpacks in these areas is substantial. With record snowpacks, comes the potential for very high snowmelt streamflow. For some streams like Coal Creek which has over 350% of average snowpack and is just an inch shy of the record maximum snowpack already, it is likely not if, but merely when the high flows will occur. While many outcomes remain possible in these areas, it is prudent to begin preparation for potentially high snowmelt streamflow this spring. In other Utah watersheds, snowpacks are still above average, but some only marginally so. The Bear River is the lowest at 109% with the Weber at 127% and the Provo at 141%. Given average accumulation for February and March, northern Utah will have snowpacks from 110% to 130% of average. Southern Utah and the Uintah Basin will have between 150% and 200% of average. Precipitation for January was much above average for statewide at 167%. Northern Utah ranged from 120% to 150% and southern Utah had 200% to 360% of average. This brings the seasonal precipitation, (Oct-Jan) to 157%. Soil moisture was substantially recharged from large precipitation events in late fall and early winter as well as the recent precipitation events. Current soil moisture across the entire state is only about 10% to 15% less than what it was during active snowmelt of last spring. Estimates of soil moisture range from about 50% to 75% of saturation in the upper 24 inches of soil. Low reservoir storage is also a concern with total reservoir storage at 42% of capacity, up 3% from last year. The area of greatest drought concern is the Bear River with current reservoir storage at only 2% of capacity. Areas that could have high streamflows include the Uintah Basin, southeast Utah, Escalante, upper Sevier and the Virgin. Streamflow forecasts range from 60% to 290% of average. Surface Water Supply Indices range from 4% on the Bear River, to 95% on the Virgin.

SNOWPACK
February first snowpacks as measured by the NRCS SNOTEL system range from 109% on the Bear to 247% in southwestern Utah. Most areas in northern Utah are 15% to 30% higher than last year, whereas the Uintah Basin and everything south of Salina have double and triple snowpacks the of last year. The Midway Valley SNOTEL site currently has 49.1 inches of snow water equivalent and its April 1 average peak is only 27 inches. Of some concern are low elevation snowpacks across the state, which are below average. The Uintah Basin, Upper Sevier and southwest Utah have already surpassed their April 1 snowpack average and could easily be in the 150% to 200% of average category by April 1. Any outcome is still possible in northern Utah, including continued drought conditions.

PRECIPITATION
Mountain precipitation during January was much above average over southern Utah and the Uintah Basin (200%-360%). In northhern Utah, precipitation was 115% to 150% of average. This brings the seasonal accumulation (Oct-Jan) to 157% of average statewide.

RESERVOIRS
Storage in 41 of Utah's key irrigation reservoirs is at 42% of capacity. This is an increase of 3% from last year and reflects heavy use of reservoir storage to make up the streamflow deficit during years of drought. Most reservoir operators are utilizing a conservative strategy, storing as much water as possible.

STREAMFLOW

Snowmelt streamflows are expected to be below average to well above average across the state of Utah this year. Forecast streamflows range from 58% on the Bear at Stewart dam to 290% on Coal Creek near Cedar City. Most flows are forecast to be in the 100% to 160% range. Overall water supply conditions are improving.